

Arlington

MASTER COMPOSTERS

Forty-Third Edition

Sept. 2004

The **MASTER COMPOSTER** Program of Arlington is in partnership with Texas to dramatically decrease yard and household waste going to landfills by inspiring and educating our citizens to reduce, recycle, and reuse.

Master Composter Meeting

7 p.m. Thursday, September 9
Municipal Office Tower, 2nd floor, 201 E. Abram
(please use north entrance)

TOPIC: Introduce some new plants to your garden

Please join us in September when Arlington Master Composter, Sandra Balch will be our speaker. Sandra will introduce us to some new plants, talk about some less-well-known plants, and reminisce about a few old favorites.

Sandra Balch is a degreed horticulturist. She recently moved to Fort Worth



from Lubbock where she taught horticulture at Texas Tech University. She also worked as the Horticulture Coordinator for CEV, a multimedia company which produces educational materials. She is a member of the Native Plant Society and a volunteer at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden.

Next time
you're surfin' the net,
check these out.

nwf.org
enature.com

If you know of
an interesting website,
please email Lorrie
at anderlel@ci.arlington.tx.us
and it will be included
in the next newsletter.



CALENDAR of Events

September 4

2-hour class and work day
at Veteran's Park

September 9

Master Composter Meeting

September 11

2-hour class and work day
at River Legacy
Living Science Center

September 18

Trinity Trash Bash

October 2

Two-hour class and work day
at Veteran's Park

October 9

2-hour class and work day
at River Legacy Living
Science Center

October 16

Fall cleanup Day



Trinity Trash Bash September 18

For the 13th year, Dallas-Fort Worth will celebrate the Trinity River through an event called Trinity Trash Bash. Since 1992, 60,000 volunteers have collected 800,000 pounds of trash from the banks of the Trinity River!

As of today, 15 local cities are planning to participate in this year's Trinity Trash Bash, which is scheduled for September 18, 2004.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments, the Trinity River Authority, Keep Texas Beautiful and other environmental groups are working together to make this event come alive, but we need your help. Become a Trinity Trash Bash 2004 volunteer and show the

community that your organization cares about the Trinity River and keeping it sparkling clean.



Attn: Arlington Master Composters.....Roll up your sleeves and show your support for a cleaner Arlington by participating in this worthwhile event. A special request for Master Composter volunteers was submitted by the Parks Department. They've asked us to help at Red Cane Park located at 6500 S. Cooper Street. Last year's participants found the event to be very rewarding and a lot of fun. If interested, please see details below:

Please arrive at 9:00 am sharp.

Please wear long pants, socks and close-toed shoes.

We also suggest wearing a hat and bug spray.

Free t-shirts will be provided to all participants.

Juice, donuts and plenty of water will be provided.

Gloves and trash bags will be provided

The event ends at noon.

If you can help, please notify Lorrie Anderle at 817-459-6778 or anderlel@ci.arlington.tx.us.

"Dead zone" spreads across Gulf of Mexico

a message from CNN.com

Wed, Aug. 4, 2004, Posted 7:26 pm EDT

Houston, Texas (Reuters)—A huge "dead zone" of water so devoid of oxygen that sea life cannot live in it has spread across 5,800 square miles of the Gulf of Mexico this summer in what has become an annual occurrence caused by pollution.

The extensive area of uninhabitable water may be contributing indirectly to an unusual spate of shark bites along the Texas coast, experts said.

A scientist at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium said Tuesday measurements showed the dead zone extended from the mouth of the Mississippi River in southeastern Louisiana 250 miles west to near the Texas border and was closer to shore than usual because winds and currents.

"Fish and swimming crabs escape (from the dead zone)," said Nancy Rabalais, the consortium's chief scientist for hypoxia, or low oxygen, research. "Anything else dies."

In the last 30 years, the dead zone has become an annual summer phenomenon, fed by rising use of nitrate-based fertilizers by farmers in the Mississippi watershed, Rabalais said.

The nitrates, carried into the gulf's warm summer waters by the river, feed algae blooms that use up oxygen and make the water uninhabitable.

The dead zone's size has varied each year depending on weather conditions, but averages about 5,000 square miles and remains in place until late September or early October.

Virtually nothing is being done to stop the flow of nitrates into the river, meaning the dead zone will reappear every year, Rabalais said.

The dead zone forces fish to seek better water, which may be a reason for the recent shark bites on Texas beaches.

Three people have been bitten by sharks along the upper Texas coast this year — a high number for a state that

has recorded only 18 shark attacks since 1980.

Terry Stelly, an ecosystem biologist with the Texas parks and Wildlife Department, said increasing numbers of sharks have been found in recent years in the waters along the Texas-Louisiana border, near the edge of the dead zone.

Along with other factors, "chances are good they (sharks) were looking for a higher dissolved oxygen in the water," he said.

Rabalais agreed. "The higher number of sharks in shallow waters may very likely be due to the low oxygen being close to the shore at the time of the attacks," she said.

"The available habitat for the sharks is definitely less when the low oxygen is so widespread."

Find this article at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/TECH/science/08/04/environment.deadzone.reut/index.html>

The Crotchety Composter by John Darling

Where there's smoke, there's ozone

I'm staring out my window as I avoid writing and see that my neighbor's burning a bunch of limbs and twigs as if he still lived way out in the country. As if it weren't a level-red ozone day. On the other hand, he brings all his beer cans back to Arlington for recycling from his lake house in East Texas. Makes me kinda crotchety and hopeful all at once.



Mark Claburn with Tierra Verde's compost tea maker. They're not kidding around out there, it really is environmentally friendly golf.

Tea (tee?) time

First I got excited about compost tea while dodging golf balls, then I substituted at the 2-hour class for a couple of women from Taiwan. They told me about a compost tea maker that apartment dwellers commonly use over there. While trying to look it up on the Internet, I got distracted by a method for making aerated tea at home and had to try it because there were gadgets involved. I've no



idea about the virtues of the tea, but did discover one small flaw: You're supposed to stir the soup often, then replace three aquarium bubblers way down at the bottom of the bucket. Maybe I'm missing something here, but it seems messy even to me.

Actual home brewing of aerated compost and results of replacing aquarium bubblers.

The directions included information that was brand new to me, the claim that some compost is dominated by bacteria

(heavy on the greens) and some by fungi (lots of browns). The website claims that the kind of compost you brew with should be related to the intended use of the tea: bacteri-

al for fighting diseases and fungal for making the soil happy. Who knew? The site is taunton.com/finegardening/pages/g00030.asp

It's all happening (or not) at Tierra Verde

On July 1 those environmental golf guys hosted a compost roundtable for municipal officials and commercial producers of dairy compost. Turns out there's over 100,000 cows polluting the watersheds of the Bosque and Leon Rivers, and the state is seriously encouraging dairy composting as a pollution solution. It all sounded good to me, then it got even better when I heard our Tierra Verde folks talk about how they really do use truckloads of compost. Employees Evonne Sandas and Tami Busby led a tour, pointing out that golf courses are built on sand, so the grass needs a lot of help, the kind that compost loves to give as a topdressing on stressed, highly compacted areas. That led me to ask TV supervisor Mark Claburn about his use of compost tea. They have a big setup; it makes 25- to

30-gallon batches of aerated compost that are also used by the other courses in town. They apply the tea with things like molasses and orange oil, and Mark and Tami swear by it.

In the midst of all this enlightened activity, what's not happening at Tierra Verde is volunteers at the compost site, and we need several badly. If you can spare some time on any Saturday morning, let Lorrie know and you'll get directions (and thanks) right away. John Presson and family are getting worn out over there, so much so that he's become hysterical and has recently taken a very nasty photo of a budgie that landed on fire ants and expired unpleasantly. I had to promise to include his photo here just to try to keep him calm, but one of our cats looked at it and threw up on the exposed budgie



If you're a budgie, don't land on fire ants. Don't do it even if you're not a budgie.

bits. Literally. I've edited the ghastly thing a little and hope that it will satisfy him without offending you.

(Crotchety Composter continued on back page)

Another trip, another tip

A while back I read a quirky book called *Diary of a Compost Hotline Operator*, by Spring Gillard, who works at the Vancouver Compost Demonstration Garden. A couple of weeks ago we went to Vancouver and I took myself to the site while my domestic supervisor toiled. To my surprise, Spring mistook me for some-



Vancouver author Spring Gillard in her greenhouse office. She really answers the phone with, "Compost hotline operator. How can I help you?" It's true; I heard her say it.



Part of the Vancouver Compost Demonstration Garden. The remarkable City Farmer organization is based here, as well as a bunch of compost bins hiding in the vegetation.

one of consequence and gave me a wonderful deluxe tour. I came away with the idea that, no matter how much we do here, we'll never catch up with those pesky Canadians. It's not just compost and recycling; a group there called City Farmer promotes every possible thing in the way of sustainable urban living: rainwater catchment, cob building,

A Message from the Backyard Compost Education Program Coordinator

As always, I look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming meeting. It is exciting that we have so many talented master composters such as Sandra Balch who are willing to share their knowledge with us.

For those unable to attend our last meeting, the Arlington Master Composter

program recently received a \$45,000 grant to help fund improvements to our demonstration sites. The funding will be available this fall so look for more details and more volunteer opportunities in a few weeks.

Thanks for all you do.

— Lorrie



organic food gardening, permeable paving, composting toilets, and more. You name it, they've got it. You should

read Spring's book, especially if you like lots of good information sprinkled liberally with light-hearted humor.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED